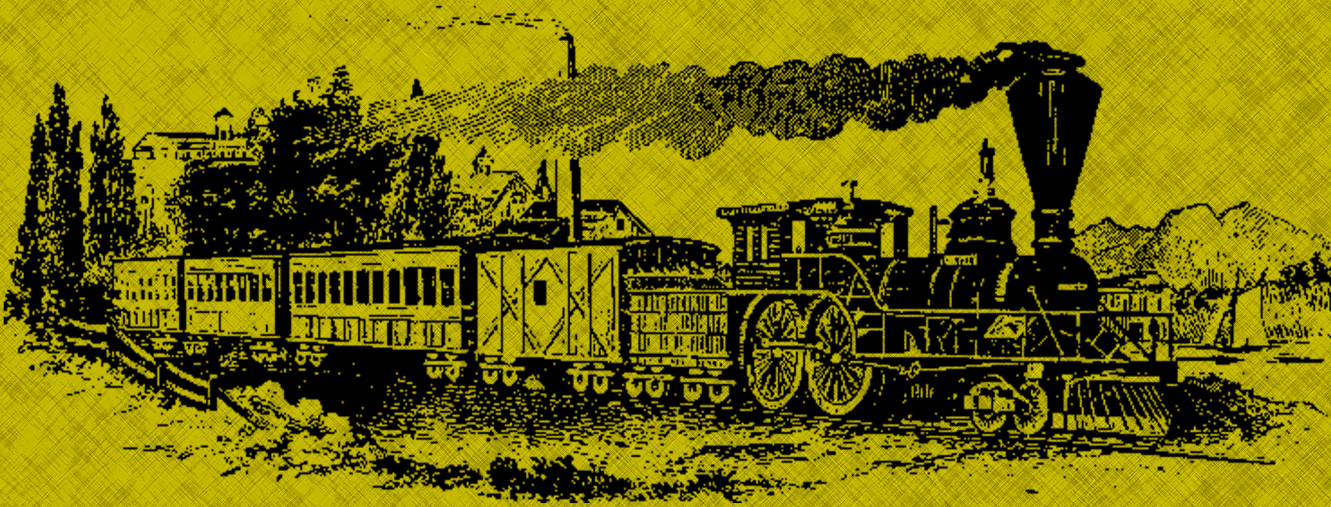


ALL ABOARD FOR MURDER!



A MURDER MYSTERY SCENARIO FOR RYUUTAMA

G. P. DAVIS

STOP WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

Before proceeding any further, ask yourself, “Do I ever want to play a PC in this scenario?”

If the answer to that question is anything besides, “No!” then you should stop right here.

As you probably already realize, this is a murder mystery. The PCs, therefore, spend most of their time questioning witnesses and collecting data to determine the identity of the culprit or culprits. This narrative drama evaporates if a PC knows “whodunnit” in advance, or suspects one or the other of the plot twists involved.

So, that said, SPOILERS AHEAD.

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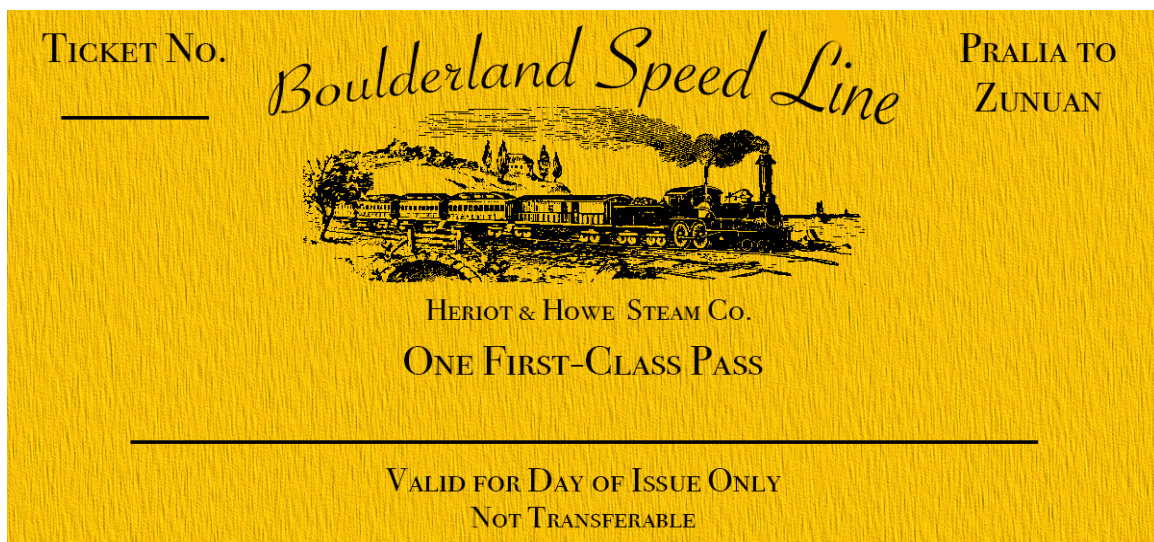
So basically, don't be terrible.

SPECIAL THANKS

I'd like to thank Okada-san for creating Ryuutama, and Andy and Matt for translating and supporting it for the English-speaking audience.

Every session of Ryuutama I've played has been a special, delightful experience, and I can't wait to do it again.

I'd also like to thank the following users on the Kotodama Heavy Industries Discord server, @Daylight, @Gyro, @prot, and @shylax, all of whom played PCs in the original playtest of this scenario.



INTRODUCTION

This scenario is the product of a conversation I had on the Kotodama Heavy Industries Discord server on Good Friday of 2019. After a discussion of the logistics of renting horses and operating stage coaches, I ultimately suggested using railroads in a Ryuutama game. Matt then suggested a murder mystery scenario, and finding myself alone and unburdened by any kind of real life duties, I couldn't get the idea out of my head. Over the course of the night, what follows sprung from my mind essentially fully-formed.

I hope that any group that runs this scenario enjoys playing through it as much as I enjoyed writing it. I'm sure clever GMs can expand upon the basic bits I've included here.

If you do play it, drop me a line and let me know how your game went. I'm user @Yppv on Discord and /u/Zqquu on Reddit. I welcome any suggestions or feedback — as long as you're not mean-spirited about it.

RUNNING ALL ABOARD...

There are two major plot twists in *All Aboard for Murder*!

The first is that the titular murder isn't actually a murder at all; in fact, no one dies in this scenario!

The second twist has to do with the identity of The Conductor; he's presented in such a way that the PCs will assume he's the Ryuujin, when in fact, he's a disguised gobroach, and the perpetrator of (most of) the several crimes.

If you're already running a Ryuutama game, this scenario should be easy to use as a one-off bridge between other adventures. Of course, it's

also written so that it could serve as a jumping-off point for a journey through Zunuan (the train's destination). The place names aren't really that important, and they've only been fleshed out to an extent necessary to make the NPCs interesting.

With respect to the climax of the scenario, (that The Conductor has captured the true Ryuujin and imprisoned her in the locked engine cab) this can also be adjusted to your tastes, and to your campaign.

Given the subject matter of this adventure, a Black Ryuujin seems to be the most natural fit, but because, in the end, no one dies, *All Aboard for Murder*! could possibly serve as a short interlude in games using one of the other Ryuujin — indeed, from a meta-perspective, it would be appropriate to have one of the other Ryuujin be usurped by a villain while the story follows a darker track.

You can find detailed descriptions of the NPCs in **Appendix A**. I've included no stats for them, since — if you even need them — they will depend on the level and composition of your group. None of these characters should be that difficult to stat-up on the fly; in fact, they might end up better-tailored if you do so knowing precisely what made it necessary.

As designed, this scenario is meant for 2-4 players characters. It can, of course, accommodate more, however if the GM wants to use the included maps and their default sleeping assignments, some PCs will either have to double bunk, or snuggle with Oggillian in the luggage car.

RYUUTAMA—ON A TRAIN!

Setting Ryuutama on a train requires a few modifications to the normal flow of the game.

The first and most obvious of these is that the Direction Check is pointless; you're literally being "rail-roaded" to your destination.

The second of these is that rather than terrain and weather difficulties, the Travel and Camping Checks instead take into account the conditions involved in train travel. After all, the PCs are confined in a series of loosely connected cars that are trundling down a metal track at a brisk speed. Space is at a premium, and this environment presents a unique set of hazards.

For example, a PC moving between cars could lose their footing and twist an ankle or fall into another object; or they could be hit by a piece of unsecured luggage.

The PCs' fellow passengers can be hazardous to them as well. In fact, one passenger (Doctor Whitmore), is so ill at the start of the game that he cannot leave his sleeping compartment.

STEAM LOCOMOTION

The Boulderland Speed Line is operated by Heriot & Howe Steam Company. Messrs. Myron F. Heriot and Granville O. Howe were early pioneers of Pralian steam travel. Today the corporation bearing their name operates several rail lines that transport people and goods all over the continent of Obios. They are headquartered in the rich northern nation of Woglor.

Like most modern steam locomotives, the Boulderland Speed's engine is fueled by a family of fire

elementals who live below a large boiler tank. Their natural body heat produces steam in this vessel. The steam is then routed into the engine to move a series of pistons, ultimately causing the cab's wheels to turn and propel the whole train forward.

The elementals themselves are numerous. They live a rich, communal lifestyle, and subsist on *perpetual coal*. Contrary to its name, this substance must be changed out every decade or so.

THE BOULDERLAND SPEED LINE

The Boulderland Speed Line is so-designated because it can complete the journey from Pralia to Zunuan — crossing the whole continent of Obios — in three days. It moves at a brisk clip, and boasts the fastest sustained speed of any of Heriot & Howe's locomotives.

Along with the engine, the Boulderland Speed Train is composed of five cars, which are, (from front to back) a luggage car, two sleeper cars, a dining car, and a caboose. These are coupled together one after the other.

Passengers and train employees are free to move between the cars, (but not always into the engine cab, see below). However, because the train is moving over rail tracks through the wilderness of Boulderland, movement between cars can be dangerous for the unwary. With the exception of the luggage car's large side cargo door, all the other entrances and exits on the Boulderland Speed Train are self-closing, and passengers must unlatch and hold the doors open to operate them.

Maps of each of these cars are provided at the end of this book.

The Engine. Most of the locomotive's cab is taken up by the steam engine itself. A large aperture allows maintenance access. However, because fire elementals are, on the whole, rather self-involved little fellows (and don't like to be disturbed), this is only infrequently necessary.

The family of fire elementals currently living in the engine belong to the lineage of Hismorash the Inestimable. Their current *begum* is one Firoza bint Umayyah. This scenario doesn't give the PCs any reason to disturb her or her family, but if they do, they'll find that the Begum is uninterested in anything going on beyond her boiler furnace.

The cab also boasts a small compartment on one side. Often this is used as a sleeping compartment for the train's operator or conductor. In our adventure, however, the false Conductor has spread hay on the floor as bedding, and uses it as a prison. Like any gobroach's lair, it is filthy, and smells worse.

The door to the engine cab from the luggage car is kept locked. There are two keys present on the train in this scenario, one possessed by the nekogoblin Iq, the other by The Conductor himself.

The Luggage Car. Space is at a premium in the cabins of the sleeper cars, so the train's luggage car serves primarily as temporary storage for any of the passengers' belongings that they won't need ready access to during their journey.

Also found here are items and tools required for servicing the train in route, as well as the dining car's reserve food stuffs, and housekeeping

necessities like extra bed linens and cleaning supplies.

This car is equipped with two stalls for animals, which can serve in a pinch as temporary quarters for surplus passengers. For the Boulderland Speed's current trip, the largest of these is occupied by the Pedlar's mule, Oggilian. The nekogoblins have also secured her wagon cart against the opposite wall.

While the doors to the luggage car are not locked, passengers are discouraged from going in and out of it, and are likely to be chased out by the nekogoblins if they spend too much time in here.

The Sleeper Cars. This train includes two sleeper cars. They are identical in layout and features.

Each of these cars have four sleeper cabins. The front and rear cabins are furnished with one bed, while the two middle cabins have two. Additionally, each cabin contains its own small lavatory. The middle rooms are also equipped with a thin dresser, while the single rooms have a small table.

Space in all of these rooms is limited; they're not intended for prolonged occupation. Most passengers, especially those who share a room, will likely prefer to spend most of their waking hours in the dining car, which affords slightly more freedom of movement.

Room assignments on this particular trip are as follows:

SLEEPER CAR 1

(From Front to Back)

Cabin 1: Marietta and Erik

Cabin 2: Roscoe and Ozakar

Cabin 3: Two PCs

Cabin 4: The Pedlar

SLEEPER CAR 2

(From Front to Back)

Cabin 1: Urmas and Fruitcake Sampson

Cabin 2: Two PCs

Cabin 3: Persephone and Goto

Cabin 4: Doctor Whitmore

The Dining Car. The main feature of this car is the long bar which runs for most of its length. A row of stools are built into the floor in front of this, while a cabinet displaying a multicolored variety of various libations stands behind it. When he's not helping Puut in the kitchen, the nekogoblin bartender Blid is usually found here.

The kitchen occupies most of the forward part of the dining car. In this small compartment, the nekogoblin chef prepares three meals a day (and an afternoon snack) for passengers while the train is on its journey. While Puut often complains about the small size of his workspace, the dining car, like the sleeping cabins, is not designed to serve big parties, or satisfy passengers any longer than it takes to complete the journey across Obios.

Finally, the dining car contains four tables with bench seats placed on either side. Like most of the other permanent items of furniture

on the train, these are bolted to the floor of the car, and cannot be moved without inflicting damage to themselves or their moorings.

The Caboose. The final car of the Boulderland Speed Train serves as a residence for the nekogoblin crew. Each of the nekogoblins has chosen one of the stall-like berths here. These are furnished with straw sleeping pallettes, and one or two pieces of furniture where the creatures store their clothing and personal effects.

At the forward entrance of the car is a large table, and two large cabinets. These serve as additional storage for the nekogoblins, and the table is usually cluttered with whatever pieces of work or personal diversions with which the various nekogoblins are currently occupied in their off-time.

While the caboose may be untidy at places, it is clean, and smells like warm hay and lavender, a scent of which the nekogoblin Ugz is particularly fond.

The rear exit from this car opens onto a canopied balcony which looks out rearward from the train. None of the caboose's doors are usually locked, because passengers do not normally have cause to enter it.

OPENING SCENE

ALL ABOARD!

The Party has arrived at a train station on the eastern edge of the nation of Pralia. They've decided to take a train to the country of Zunuan, which lies on the other side of the small continent of Obios. None of them have ever been to Zunuan, but they've heard wonderful rumors of the magical and technological advances that foreign country has made over the past two decades.

The purpose of this scene is to introduce the setting and PCs to one another.

Time, Weather, and Terrain: By the time the PCs arrive at the station and purchase their tickets, it's just after sunset. There's a dense fog all about the platform, thus the target number for terrain+weather checks is 9.

Senses: *[You had trouble finding the train station, let alone finding the train. The fog is thick enough that you feel like it could hold you up. All sound is muffled, and the lights of the waiting train appear hazy and distant.]*

Events: The PCs make their initial condition checks and encounter The Conductor: *["Oh, what have we here? Travelers? Adventurers perhaps?"]*

The Conductor will never identify himself as the Conductor, but allow the players to assume he is. He'll punch their tickets at the door of the train and assign

them to their sleeping compartments.

This is a good opportunity for the PCs to introduce themselves if they haven't traveled with one another before. The GM can explain to them that this train has two sleeper cars with eight cabins between them. Some cabins sleep two adult persons, while others are intended for single-occupancy. The PCs are assigned to Cabin 3 in sleeper car 1, and Cabin 2 in sleeper car 2. How they split up is their decision.

The PCs may be curious about their luggage at this point. The luggage car has room for any baggage or carts they wish to bring along. It's also equipped with two small stables for animals, but currently the Pedlar's mule Oggillian occupies the largest of these. If the PCs have a significant amount of animals and baggage, the GM can discretely add another luggage car to hold everything.

If appropriate, The Conductor will tell the PCs to leave any items they wish to have loaded into the luggage car at a designated spot on the platform and the porters will do the rest. Of course, the nekogoblins will be doing the porting, but it's suggested that the PCs don't actually see them at this point. That allows these guys to enter in style during Act 1.

ACT 1

HERE WE GO!

While the PCs settle into their cabins, the train gets moving. As soon as they're sorted, they're visited by The Conductor, who invites them to dinner in the dining car. This is the first opportunity the PCs will have to collect data on their fellow passengers.

Every scene where the PCs are moving through the cars implicates the **Travel Check**. The GM can require a Travel Check everytime a PC moves through an individual car, however, it is recommended that this only be required once per destination, as the PCs will be moving through multiple cars during Scene 2, and possibly making several trips throughout the train in their investigations.

Time, Weather, and Terrain: It's now nighttime, and the train is moving slowly through the Pralian countryside. The train is well-lit, but it is a confined space, and traveling over tracks through rising terrain. Movement inside the passenger areas of the train therefore has a **Difficulty of 7**.

Senses: *[With a jolt, the train pulls out of the station. It seems to shake from side to side as it trundles through eastern Pralia at a low speed. The hallway is lit by candles in glass globes, and the car's interior presents a stark contrast to the gray world outside. You can smell food coming from the train's dining car.]*

Events: This scene contains a lot of information that the PCs might find significant later.

Overheard Coughing. On their way to the dining car, the PCs pass Doctor Whitmore's cabin. They hear him

having a coughing fit. If the PCs knock or ask if the person inside is okay, the Doctor will simply answer that he's ill, and then continue to cough. If the PCs try to enter the room (rude!), they'll find the door locked.

Dinner. When the PCs arrive, the following NPCs are already inside the dining car: Marietta, Erik, Roscoe, Goto, Persephone, Ozakar, and The Pedlar. Urmas and Fruitcake Sampson will enter later. The nekogoblin Blid is tending bar, and Puut is pushing a food cart down the aisle. The GM should describe the respective appearances of these individuals in turn.

The PCs will have a meal and socialize before heading to bed. The following are several events and observations that will take place over the course of this scene, organized by relevant NPC.

Marietta and Erik. Initially, Marietta and Erik are sitting at a table together. Marietta has a large piece of cake in front of her, while Erik has nothing. Erik will seem to doze off, and Marietta will slam her fist on the table. "Wake up Erik! I was talking to you!" she'll shout in a loud voice. The PCs will notice her Woglorian accent. Erik won't be startled, but does raise his head and seem to pay attention to Marietta.

Roscoe. Throughout the night, Roscoe will sit alone at the bar nursing whiskey, and idly pluck at his banjo. The PCs will notice that he openly stares at the other passengers, primarily Marietta. This should make the PCs feel uncomfortable.

Persephone and The Pedlar.

Persephone and the Pedlar aren't eating, because The Pedlar has spread a cloth over one of the tables and is now showing off several long knives. Persephone is specifically admiring a sharp, *cute* knife with a large yellow flower blossom on the hilt. This *cute* knife is an important plot element, because it's the same one that's later used to stab Erik.

Ozakar. Ozakar is sitting alone at the bar and sketching in a journal. His food sits in front of him, untouched. At some point, the PCs will observe him check his watch, then remove a small vial from his pocket and drink a bit of the red liquid inside. If the PCs get a look at what he's sketching, they'll see that he's drawn the aftermath of a battle, complete with very detailed depictions of mangled corpses.

Goto. Goto will begin the night eating by herself at the bar, while doing a crossword puzzle. After she finishes eating, she'll try to get up a game of cards. If the PCs hang around long enough, they'll see her begin to play with Erik. The conclusion of this is that Erik beats her and takes a significant amount of money. Goto gets upset with him and shouts, [*"I could kill you right now!"*] Then she goes to bed.

Urmas and Fruitcake Sampson.

After the Pedlar leaves the dining car, but before the nekogoblins enter, Urmas and Fruitcake will appear. They'll ignore everyone and head to the bar. Urmas will order two glasses of brandy, one for each of them. Urmas will make occasional small talk with Blid, and will only interact with the PCs if they initiate the conversation.

The Nekogoblins. Blid and Puut will perform their duties uneventfully, until the other four nekogoblins burst onto the scene and make a ruckus. [*"Wow guys, I'm so~ hungry!"*] They'll plop down at an empty table if one is available, or force some of the NPCs to the bar if all the tables are full. When they're settled, the nekogoblins will shout for Blid, who will tell them in no uncertain terms that he's not serving them a drop of alcohol. They'll then try to get the attention of Puut, who will ignore them at first, but ultimately will come and take their order.

Going to Bed. When the PCs finally decide to go to bed, they can make their camping checks. Since they'll be split between two separate sleeping cabins, the PCs will have to make two **Camping Checks**, one for each cabin. Outside the fog is starting to thin. Inside the train, conditions remain unchanged, so the **target number is still 7**.

TURNING POINT 1

MURDER!

When the PCs awake the next morning and look outside, they see a sunny landscape of green grass and the occasional rocky outcropping or solitary boulder.

The PCs should make their morning **Condition Checks**. When they leave their sleeping compartments, they're immediately greeted by pleasant smells of food wafting down the corridor from the dining car.

The train has left the settled areas of eastern Pralia, and is now moving at full speed. Thus, it is shaking a bit more, and the **PC's target number** (i.e., Terrain + "Weather") for their **Travel Check** is now **raised to 9**.

The Dining Car. As they enter the dining car, Roscoe pushes past them and runs down the corridor to the forward sleeping car.

Looking inside, the PCs will see The Conductor along with the four nekogoblins Ak, Iq, Slaaq, and Ugz standing over the body of Erik, who is laying in the aisle with the *cute* knife sticking out of his back.

Blid and Puut are seemingly oblivious to the scene, and busy themselves setting out a savory breakfast buffet. The other passengers aren't present, yet.

Before the PCs have time to examine the body, The Conductor orders the nekogoblins to remove it to the luggage car, and to clean up the small dark stain on the carpet. The nekogoblins

hurry to comply, because they'd really like to sit down to breakfast.

As the nekogoblins are carrying Erik out, Roscoe rushes back into the dining car. [*"She's gone!" he says, "I've checked every cabin! Marietta is gone!"*]

Ozakar, Urmas and Fruitcake Sampson arrive behind him. Goto, The Pedlar, and Persephone will not arrive until Scene 2.

The Conductor tries to dismiss Roscoe's concerns, (as well as anyone else's concerns) saying that the train is moving at full speed now, and that if Marietta left it (or was taken or thrown off) she's likely dead as well. Otherwise, she's probably still on the train somewhere, and perhaps in hiding. The Conductor goes on to say that he must return to his duties in the engine cab, and that he'll telegraph the Zunuan Office so that the authorities will be prepared for an inquest when the train arrives. He also mentions as an aside that he'll explain matters to Doctor Whitmore, who remains far too ill to leave his cabin.

The Conductor will wink at the PCs on his way out. After he speaks with the Doctor, The Conductor will go to the engine cab and lock himself in. If the PCs (incorrectly) assume that he's not a suspect, they probably won't have any interaction with him until the climax.

ACT 2

“SOMEONE, DO SOMETHING!”

Goto, The Pedlar, and Persephone arrive after The Conductor leaves, and Goto and Persephone are visibly upset when they hear the news. Persephone demands that [*“Someone — do something!”*] and claims that she [*“Cannot, under any circumstances, stay on this train while there’s a murder on the loose.”*]

Unfortunately for Persephone, stopping the train accomplishes nothing. It’s passing out of rural Pralia and into the unsettled wilds of Boulderland. Just in case a not-so-clever PC asks, it doesn’t move in reverse. The most direct route to any kind of policing authority is therefore to proceed on to Zunan at full speed.

At this point, the PCs are free to begin their investigation. If they aren’t immediately interested in assuming this role, the GM can use Persephone and the other passengers to push them into it.

All of the NPCs will either stay in the dining car, or go back to their cabins, where the PCs can interact with them.

Working through this scene in a meaningful way requires the GM to have command of the different NPCs involved, thus, you should be familiar with the information in their entries in the NPC sections. These are found in **Appendix A**. The table on the following page covers several bits of critical information that the GM will probably want to provide during the PC’s discussions with the NPCs.

Remaining NPCs. Extensive PC contact with the remaining NPCs,

namely Doctor Whitmore and the nekogoblins, is best deferred until the PCs have had a chance to thoroughly interrogate the passengers above, since information gleaned from the Doctor and the nekogoblins can initiate the final act of the game.

For his part, the Doctor is too sick to do anything until healed. The nekogoblins, on the other hand, will be busy taking care of the train, and guarding Erik’s body. Moreover, they aren’t really that interested in anyone else’s problems, and have a very short attention span.

During Act 2, the PCs may check on items they’ve either left in their sleeping compartments, or stored in the luggage car. If this occurs, the GM should feel free to have one (or several) of these items disappear. This provides a further stray plot thread for the PCs to chase down, and helps to bring about the second of the Turning Points listed below.

Erik’s Body. At some point, clever PCs may want to examine Erik’s body for clues; the nekogoblins are guarding it, and will prevent a close inspection, saying, [*“Who do you think you are, a doctor? Lemme see some credentials, bub.”*]

Of course, the PCs might have a doctor among them. However they convince the nekogoblins to allow them to do it, inspection of the body by a doctor or individual with comparable skills will reveal that Erik is an automaton. However, it will take the skill of Doctor Whitmore, or the nekogoblins Ak and Slaaq, to reactivate him.

| NPC | Cause for Suspicion | Important Information | Will Accuse |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Goto | Was furious at Erik for winning at cards. | Remembers seeing Urmas's face on a wanted poster in Pralia. | Urmas; he's a wanted criminal. |
| Ozakar | <p>A soldier whose lungs were injured in a Woglorian gas attack.</p> <p>Morbid. Thinks a lot about dying and death, and spends a lot of time drawing graphic scenes of battlefield carnage</p> <p>Has killed Woglorians before.</p> <p>Doesn't think Woglorians bleed enough.</p> | <p>He must drink a red elixir every four hours to stave off symptoms of his respiratory injury.</p> <p>The elixir is a wonder, and suppresses or outright cures all symptoms of sickness in a body for four hours.</p> | Marietta; she's conveniently disappeared. |
| The Pedlar | <p>Doesn't show up until the body is taken away.</p> <p>Persephone never bought the <i>cute</i> knife.</p> <p>When the PCs check her luggage, the <i>cute</i> knife is missing.</p> | <p>Doesn't know the <i>cute</i> knife was used until told.</p> <p>Also remembers seeing Urmas's face on a wanted poster, but remembers that his alleged offense was petty swindling.</p> | <p>Persephone; her airs hide a more vicious nature.</p> <p>The nekogoblins; they don't respect property rights.</p> |
| Persephone | <p>Doesn't show up until after the body is taken away.</p> <p>She loathes Woglorians, and doesn't think they should mix with persons of other nationalities.</p> | <p>Doesn't know the <i>cute</i> knife was used until told.</p> <p>Never purchased the <i>cute</i> knife.</p> | Roscoe; he's a creep, also he spurned her advances. |
| Roscoe | <p>Is looking for his muse, thought he'd found her in Marietta.</p> <p>Is the subject of a restraining order for harassment.</p> <p>Creepy dude.</p> | <p>Seems genuinely distraught at Marietta's disappearance.</p> | Goto; she's loud and brash, and was furious with Erik for beating her at cards. |
| Urmas (and Fruitcake Sampson) | <p>Goto and The Pedlar have seen Urmas's face on wanted posters in Pralia.</p> <p>He read Marietta's fortune, and scared the girl.</p> | | The Pedlar; he will claim that he doesn't trust "her ilk" but really, he's correctly identified her as the savviest passenger aboard, and is afraid that she'll spoil his gifts. |

TURNING POINTS AND ACT 3

“WHY, HE’S NOT DEAD AT ALL!”

Three conditions can signal a movement into the final stage of this scenario.

THE CURING OF DOCTOR WHITMORE

In the first two acts of the game, the Doctor is too sick to interact with the PCs, but if he’s lucky, the PCs will discover the secret of Ozakar’s elixir. Ozakar has more of the stuff, and will relinquish his pocket vial to the PCs in the hopes it can help a fellow sufferer.

Once the Doctor is cured, he’ll be happy to assist the PCs in any way he reasonably can. Presented with the person of the Doctor, the nekogoblins will allow him to examine Erik’s body. He’ll determine immediately that Erik isn’t human and wasn’t murdered, and knows a way to reboot him.

After taking a moment to get his bearings, Erik will tell the PCs that The Conductor was the one that stabbed him. Most likely, this will cause the PCs to head for the engine cab, where The Conductor is holding his captives.

THE NEKOGOBLINS

The PCs may never cure Doctor Whitmore, in which case, the nekogoblins can let slip that Erik, The Conductor, or the the murder itself aren’t what they seem.

A good way to present this situation is where the PCs find one of their items missing during Act 2. At this point, one of the NPCs can let drop that they recently saw one of the nekogoblins (Ak or Slaaq) coming out of that area carrying something suspicious.

With this leverage (*i.e.*, a credible accusation against one of the nekogoblins), they’ll immediately become more cooperative. The nekogoblins are guarding Erik, might suspect that he’s not human, and certainly know that The Conductor isn’t the actual conductor of the train. The nekogoblin Iq also holds the only key (besides The Conductor’s) that allows access to the engine cab.

Moreover, the nekogoblins (specifically Ak and Slaaq) can help the PCs revive Erik, if the PCs are able to convince them to allow an examination of Erik’s body without the Doctor present, *and* are able to determine that Erik isn’t a biological human.

Finally, clever PCs who wish to secure the nekogoblins’ cooperation might attempt to bribe them. All of the nekogoblins, besides Blid and Puut, will respond well to bribery; they like alochol and they like money, in that order. Blid and Puut, on the other hand, are above such schemes, and will seek to foil any attempts by their fellows to conspire with the PCs — should they discover them.

ACCUSATIONS & BEDLAM

The scenario has to end somehow, and the PCs — by nature a superstitious and distractible lot — may finger one or another of the NPCs. If so, it’s up to the GM to play the scene for maximum drama, with accusations going back and forth, various NPCs attempting to flee, fisticuffs, etc.

One way or another, eventually, the GM has to pull the trigger on the final scene.

CLIMAX

“AND I WOULD HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT...”

Whether the PCs storm the engine cab with the information provided by Erik or the nekogoblins, or (in a residual contingency) whether absolute chaos breaks out on the train, The Conductor recognizes that he’s not going to be able to maintain his ruse for the rest of the trip to Zunuan.

He’ll pull the emergency break, and attempt to flee the train with Marietta in tow. However, the struggling girl will slow him down significantly, and the PCs should be able to catch up to him. This can occur relatively immediately, or the GM can draw it out and have the PCs hunt The Conductor through the wilds of Boulderland.

If the GM chooses this second option, the **rocky terrain** of Boulderland is **Difficulty 9**, although the **weather remains clear**. Boulderland is also inhabited by various “monsters” and other beasts that the PCs might encounter if they spend long enough wandering around.

When the PCs do finally corner The Conductor, the nature of the final confrontation probably depends on their personalities. Does The Conductor throw off his disguise, reveal his

identity and loudly proclaim his superior intellect? Does he throw Marietta at the PCs and attempt to run away at full speed? Or does he simply attempt to fight the PCs to the death? I don’t know — you’re the GM, and if you’ve made it this far, I’m sure you’ll figure out this last bit.

In the end, once The Conductor is no longer a threat, the PCs can return to the train with Marietta. There, in the engine cab, they will discover the bound and gagged Ryuujin. Once freed, the Ryuujin will have no difficulty restarting the train, and the PCs are free to continue to Zunuan.

Marietta will be very thankful, and once things calm down, she’ll write out bank notes payable to each of the PCs, which they can present for immediate payment at a bank once they reach Zunuan. (GMs can consult the relevant chart on page 155 of the rulebook for an appropriate amount of reward).

How the PCs choose to deal the remaining NPCs is up to them, but suffice it to say that everyone on the train seems a lot closer now that they have survived this ordeal.

APPENDIX A

NPCS

THE CONDUCTOR

Appearance: Overweight, and dressed nicely in a top hat, formal cloak, and a waistcoat with shiny brass buttons. He seems to be blind in one eye, which is milky white. When the PCs first meet him, they catch the hint of a reptilian tail under his cloak. The Conductor might even wink at them with his good eye, or place his finger to his lips to communicate that it's their secret.

Personality: The Conductor will be pleasant with the PCs, but will find a way to avoid conversing with them for too long.

Purpose for Traveling: Mayhem!

Significance: Our villain. The Conductor is actually a disguised gobroach. If the GM allows the PCs to sight his (fake) reptilian tail in the Opening Scene, they'll probably assume that he's the Ryuujin. Prey on their misconceptions. The longer they fail to consider The Conductor a suspect, the longer they'll interact with the other passengers on the train.

Stats: This gobroach has stats identical to the default entry on page 198 of the rulebook. GMs using this scenario with higher level parties should consult the relevant chart on page 155 of the rulebook, and should consider modifying The Conductor's base stats accordingly.

MARIETTA VON WIRTZ

Appearance: A blond girl wearing a frilly yellow dress and carrying a cute hat and parasol. She speaks with a Woglorian accent.

Personality: Marietta is impatient, nothing moves fast enough for her. She also cares deeply for Erik — like a beloved family pet. Because she disappears between Scenes 1 and 2, the PCs will have little interaction with her. **Purpose for Traveling:** To take Erik to Zunuan in the hopes that the artificers there can fix him. She has run away without the permission of her parents.

Significance: Our McGuffin! The Conductor wants to kidnap her, because he believes he can ransom her to her family. True Woglorians (who can be discerned by their distinctive accent) are stereotypically very wealthy.

ERIK

Appearance: A tall, broad-shouldered man, of indeterminate middle age. There are wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, and his hair is graying. He is well-dressed in shirt-sleeves and a waistcoat. He also has a Woglorian accent.

Personality: Sleepy. Even awake, it's difficult to tell if Erik's eyes are open or closed. He can nod off anywhere, even in the middle of a conversation. He is deeply loyal to Marietta, but his chronic fatigue makes him absent-minded and forgetful. He is, however, very good at cards.

Purpose for Traveling: He goes where Marietta goes, and Marietta wants to take him to Zunuan.

Significance: Our victim! — but not really. This scenario is a murder story without a murder, but the PCs have to figure that out. Erik is really an automaton, and when The Conductor

stabs him with the *cute* knife, he merely falls into a deep sleep.

GOTO TOME

Appearance: Zunuanian. A dark-haired woman in her twenties. She wears clean white clerical vestments with a blue trim, goofy cylindrical hat, and large glasses.

Personality: Goto is a gossip, and shares everything with everyone. She'll ask the players all manner of questions about their lives and reasons for traveling, and will promptly share this information with the other passengers. Goto also really likes to gamble, but can't stand to lose.

| Gamblin' with Goto |
|--|
| Goto will challenge the players to a hand of cards, and is willing to wager gold on it. Players who take this opportunity must roll higher than her on a INT + SPI check . Goto's stats are 4-4-8-8 , but she'll often intentionally throw the first hand in an effort to convince her opponent to go double or nothing. |

Purpose for Traveling: Goto has been on sight-seeing (*cough* *gambling*) tour of western Obios, and is now going home.

Red-Herrings: Roscoe (and the PCs if they hadn't already gone to bed) witnessed Goto become furious at Erik when he repeatedly beat her at cards. "I could kill you right now!" he heard her say.

She Suspects: Goto thinks that Urmas killed Erik. She tells the PCs that she remembered seeing his face on a wanted poster in Pralia.

LT. OZAKAR IRMAK

Appearance: Ozakar wears a

Pralian infantry uniform, and carries both a knife sheathed at his belt, and a sword which he removes when sitting. He has a sickly complexion, and a terrible cough. When the PCs first notice him, he may cough a bit, but stops after taking a swig from a vial of red liquid.

Personality: Ozakar has been traumatized by his experiences during the war. He's terribly jumpy, and will be startled by loud sounds and boisterous PCs. He also has an obsession with death.

Purpose for Traveling: Ozakar is going to Zunuan to see if a doctor there can heal the damage to his lungs, and to get more of the red elixir. In Pralia's most recent conflict with Woglor, his unit was shelled with poison gas, and his breathing apparatus malfunctioned. Mechanically, this is an *injury* status effect with a **strength of 10**. The only thing that provides him temporary relief is the red elixir, which suppresses his symptoms for 4 hours per dose. He carries a week's worth of doses on him and in his luggage.

Red-Herrings: Ozakar keeps a journal where he sketches scenes from his life, and his dreams and nightmares. After Ozakar sees Erik's body, he will fill the journal with sketches of a dead or dying Erik. "Woglorians, they never bleed as much as you think," the PCs may overhear him mumbling to himself. If asked about this, he'll add, "Well, I should know, I've killed so many of them," with a pained expression on his face.

He Suspects: At this point in his life, Ozakar is so desensitized to violence that he doesn't really care who killed whom. If pressed to offer an opinion, he'll suggest that Marietta killed Erik, if only because she's no where to

be found.

THE PEDLAR
(CAFATIA RUFEE)

Appearance: Cafatia is a short, stocky middle-aged woman with wiry graying hair. She wears a thick flannel shirt, practical-looking traveling pants, a faded rainbow scarf, and goggles. She has a soft voice, and likes to keep eye contact with whomever she is conversing. The other NPCs don't know her name, and instead call her The Pedlar.

Personality: The Pedlar has been an itinerant merchant all her life. She is stoic and exceedingly practical, and doesn't really care for all the petty dramas stirred up by travelers like Persephone and Goto.

Purpose for Traveling: Cafatia is going to Zunuan to purchase several kinds of *high quality* fabric, which is highly coveted by the artisans of western Obios. Her cart is currently stored in the train's luggage car, along with her mule, Oggillian.

| The Peddlin' Pedlar |
|---|
| Cafatia has many items in her cart, which she is taking to Zunuan as exchange goods. She is, however, absolutely willing to buy and sell with the PCs, if she feels the bargain is fair to her. |

Red-Herrings: When the PCs first notice The Pedlar, she's haggling with Persephone over a distinctive *cute* knife, which is later found in the body of Erik. If the PCs ask Persephone about the knife, she'll say she didn't buy it, and complain about The Pedlar's prices. The Pedlar is also absent when the body of Erik is discovered, so until asked, she doesn't know that the

cute knife was the murder weapon.

She Suspects: If asked about the *cute* knife, The Pedlar will suggest that the PCs go with her to check her inventory. Once at her cart, Cafatia will discover that the *cute* knife is missing. She'll conclude at this point that it was Persephone who stole it, or perhaps one of the Nekogoblins.

PERSEPHONE DEIANIERA

Appearance: A walking egg. Persephone is off-white in color, and wears a pastel pink — *my eyes are up here!* — dress. It's very revealing. She also has matching shoes, a hat, and purse, all pink. If the players look away from her cleavage for a moment, they'll notice that two adhesive bandages make an X on her forehead. The bandages are hot pink with a cartoon frog print on them.

Personality: Persephone is flirtatious with men, at least until she is rejected. She treats everyone else like servants. She likes cute things and hates Woglorians.

Purpose for Traveling: Persephone is going to Zunuan to see a plastic surgeon, whom she hopes can fix the crack in her shell. She claims to have received this crack at the hands of a Woglorian, who bumped into her on a crowded street.

Red-Herrings: During Scene 1, the PCs will observe her haggling over the price of a *cute* knife with the Pedlar. This is the same knife that is used to stab Erik. Persephone also hates Woglorians, and has told Goto as much.

She Suspects: Persephone thinks that Roscoe killed Erik, because she thinks he's a creep — that is, now she does, after he ignored her advances.

ROSCOE ROADS

Appearance: Roscoe is skinny, with long lank brown hair and patchy facial hair that is just about at a stage where it can be called a beard. He wears jeans and a loose fitting shirt, and is never without his banjo. While he claims he isn't a very good musician, he's actually quite skilled.

Personality: Roscoe is sad, and very lonely. He'll be hard to talk to at first, but will brighten up if a determined PC engages him. Caution is advised. Roscoe will quickly become attached to any PC that pays attention to him, and his clinginess will be off-putting.

Purpose for Traveling: Roscoe is looking for his muse. He thought he found her once, but he realized it wasn't meant to be when the local constabulary served him with a restraining order.

Red-Herrings: Roscoe isn't very good with boundaries, and really, someone should sit him down and have a talk. The Pedlar will say that he witnessed Roscoe staring intently at Marietta, and one time it seemed as if he got up to follow her to her cabin. If asked about Roscoe, Goto will recall that Marietta said she thought he was creepy.

He Suspects: Roscoe thinks the priestess Goto stabbed Erik, because she saw Erik beat Goto at cards after the PCs went to bed, and saw how mad Goto got at him. Roscoe is also disgusted by Goto, because she's a loud, bold young woman, and he is *very* insecure.

URMAS PEKKALA and FRUITCAKE SAMPSON

Appearance: Urmas is very tall, and very thin. He's an older gentleman with long hair and a pointed goatee. He wears an *uncool* pinstripe suit with

suspenders, and carries a walking stick. His traveling companion is a precocious monkey named Fruitcake Sampson. This simian wears a cap, along with short, bright green pants and hot pink suspenders.

Personality: Urmas is a grifter, and will try to fool the PCs just because he can. He uses a unique set of tarot cards to tell fortunes, and will offer to perform a reading for the PCs.

Urmas's Fortunes: While the GM can adapt fortune-telling mechanics from other systems¹ the table on the following page can be used to quickly determine Urmas's conclusions.

The GM can assign mechanical benefits to these fortunes, such as granting a bonus, penalty, or automatic success or failure on a subsequent relevant check. Another, perhaps crueller option is to have the fortunes result in no mechanical benefits, but to allow the players to persist in the belief that they do. Urmas is a fraud, after all.

While Urmas is telling a fortune, Fruitcake Samson might attempt to pick the PCs pocket. A PC may notice this with a successful [DEX + INT] (6) check.

Purpose for Traveling: The Pralian authorities have issued a warrant for Urmas's arrest for petty swindling, and he's decided to try his luck on the other side of Obios.

¹Two RPG products with more detailed tarot rules spring to mind. The first, Iron Crown Enterprises's *The Mentalism Companion* (1998 and 2003, pp. 96-104), provides a solid introduction to the real world tarot. Similarly, the venerable Japanese TRPG *Witch Quest* (1991, English trans. 2010 by Ewen Cluney) also has a significant tarot card mechanic.

| Urmas's Fortunes | |
|------------------|--|
| Roll 2d8 | Fortune |
| 2 | Beware! Your next investment has some hidden costs. Make sure to get all of the details. |
| 3 | You're wrong! It's okay to second guess yourself. The next time you're faced with a major choice in your life, your first impulse will be wrong. |
| 4 | You can do it! Have confidence in your next major decision, you can't fail! |
| 5 | Treachery! Someone you trusted is working against you. |
| 6 | Be circumspect! You don't always have to share everything you know. Sometimes it's better not to tell the whole truth. |
| 7 | Pay attention! While you're wrapped up in your own problems, you're ignoring the one person who cares for you the most. |
| 8 | Blockhead! That annoying person you'll find yourself dealing with is really just an idiot. Don't be afraid to knock some sense into them. |
| 9 | Be kind! Your kindness towards a stranger will be repaid, and if you play your cards right, you might discover a new wealthy benefactor. |
| 10 | Study harder! You've come a long way, but you should redouble your efforts. You're going to need that knowledge in the days ahead. |
| 11 | Eat an apple! If you don't take better care of yourself, you're going to get sick. |
| 12 | Runaway! You don't have to fight everything, but if you do, that next big boss will be your last. |
| 13 | Treat yourself! More gold will come your way, but that new item you're thinking about buying, you'll never again find one like it. |
| 14 | Slow down! You should concentrate more on your next serious action. If you don't you'll wish you did later. |
| 15 | Think for yourself! That trusted mentor in your life may want what's best for you, but they're not always right. |
| 16 | Watch out! The specter of death looms over you. It might not be a bad time to take out a life insurance policy. |

Red-Herrings: Upon reflection, both Goto and The Pedlar will say that they saw Urmas's face on a wanted poster in Pralia. Goto will also tell them that Urmas read Marietta's fortune last

night, and Marietta seemed shocked by the result (she rolled a "16" on the Fortune Table). If The Conductor feels that the PCs may be on to him early on, he may contrive to have them find a wanted

poster for Urmas.

He Suspects: Urmas thinks that The Pedlar killed Erik, but only because he is afraid that the practical woman might be on to him. He'll claim that, "You can't trust her ilk."

DR. MAXIMILLIAN WHITMORE

Appearance: A balding man with a bushy white mustache. In his cabin, he'll be dressed in warm pajamas and a nightcap. If the PCs cure him (or otherwise suppress his symptoms), he will get dressed in a respectable-looking black three-piece suit. Until he's cured or his symptoms suppressed, he is bed-ridden, and has a cough that makes conversation impossible for him.

Personality: The Doctor is incapacitated unless he's cured. Treat his sickness as an extreme form of the common cold, with a strength of 10. It can be healed and suppressed normally. The red elixir carried by Ozakar will completely cure him.

Purpose for Traveling: The Doctor, a widower, has closed his practice in Pralia and is moving to Zunuan where his daughter lives with her husband and two young children.

Red-Herrings: The Doctor will be noticeably absent from proceedings. The PCs will only interact with him if they go to his cabin. They'll know that Dr. Whitmore is on the train, because the other passengers will say so. Also, as the nekogoblins carry Erik's body out of the dining car, The Conductor will mention that he will notify Dr. Whitmore, who is ill and confined to his cabin.

He Suspects: The Doctor has been bed-ridden since most of the current passengers came onboard, and hasn't had the opportunity to observe them. He's not one given to

speculation. If the PCs can get him out of bed, he'll be glad to examine Erik's body. He will immediately determine that Erik is an automaton. If the *cute* knife is removed from Erik's back, the doctor can reboot him.

AK, BLID, IQ, PUUT, SLAAQ, and UGZ

Appearance: Nekogoblins! These guys keep the train running. Puut is the train's chef, and wears a traditional white chef's uniform complete with a chef's hat. Blid is the train's bartender and an assistant to Puut, and he wears a shirt with the sleeves rolled up and a waistcoat. The other four nekogoblins perform all the other work necessary to keep the train working and clean, and to make the passengers comfortable. They wear jean overalls, and some of them have caps.

Personality: Gobunya! While the nekogoblins are hard workers, they have the emotional development of solipsistic ten-year-olds, and no attention span. They don't really care that Erik has been killed, nor do they care that they have to take his body away. Like all nekogoblins, the six of them are mischievous, but they're all generally good-natured and enjoy life on the train. Blid and Puut are by far the most responsible of the bunch, and often serve as a check on the shenanigans of their fellows.

Purpose for Traveling: They work here!

Red-Herrings: The nekogoblins don't see what the big deal is. So what if someone's dead, and another person missing? People come and go all the time. Also, Ak and Slaad have sticky fingers. The GM can have them steal

items from the PCs or NPCs, which are found upon a search of the caboose where they sleep.

They Suspect: The nekogoblins don't suspect anyone, but they also know two critical pieces of information. They know or suspect that Erik is not human, and they know that The Conductor is not the real

conductor. While the PCs might want to interrogate the nekogoblins early in the adventure, the GM should use their poor attention spans and work assignments to avoid revealing these details too early. At all times however, the nekogoblins refer to The (false) Conductor as "that guy" or "ol' scaly bottom."

APPENDIX B LOCATIONS

BOULDERLAND

The wild area between eastern Pralia and western Zunuan. It varies from rocky terrain and highlands to mountains.

PRALIA

A city-state on the western edge of the small continent of Obios. Urban Pralia has a population of roughly 50,000 people. These are supported by vast tracks of timber and superb farmlands to the east and south. The nation of Pralia is bordered by Boulderland in the east, and Woglor in the north. Pralia was formerly in conflict with Woglor, but the two nations have recently signed a peace treaty.

OBIOS

A small continent containing the countries of Pralia, Woglor, and Zunuan, as well as Boulderland and whatever else you decide to put there.

WOGLOR

A resource-rich country north of Pralia. Recently, their years-long conflict with Pralia ended, and commerce between the two nations has been normalized.

ZUNUAN

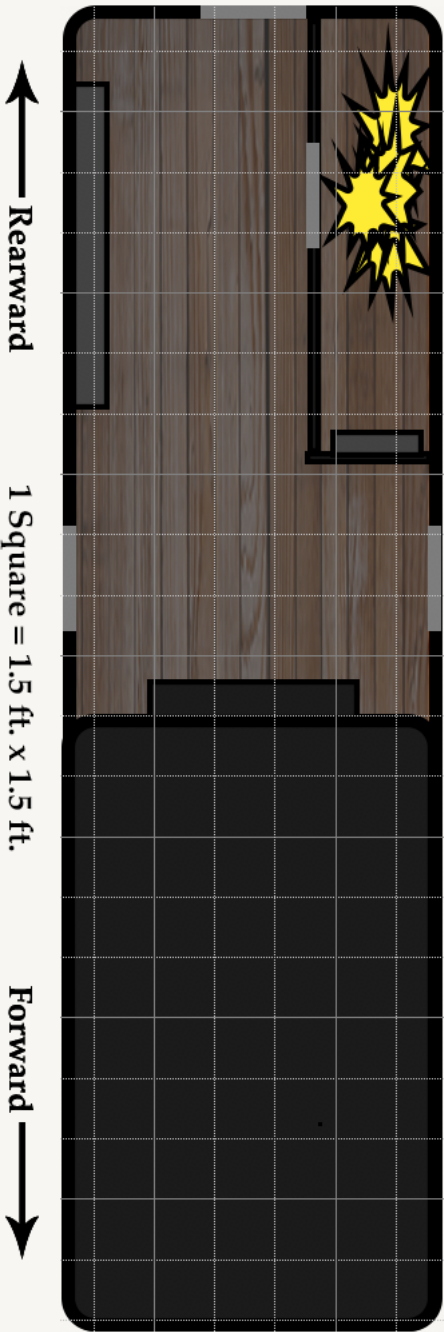
A mysterious land on the eastern side of Obios. Zunuanians are supposed to be significantly more advanced in magical knowledge and technology than Pralia or Woglor.

APPENDIX C
TRAIN CAR MAPS
(with grid overlays)

LUGGAGE CAR



ENGINE CAB

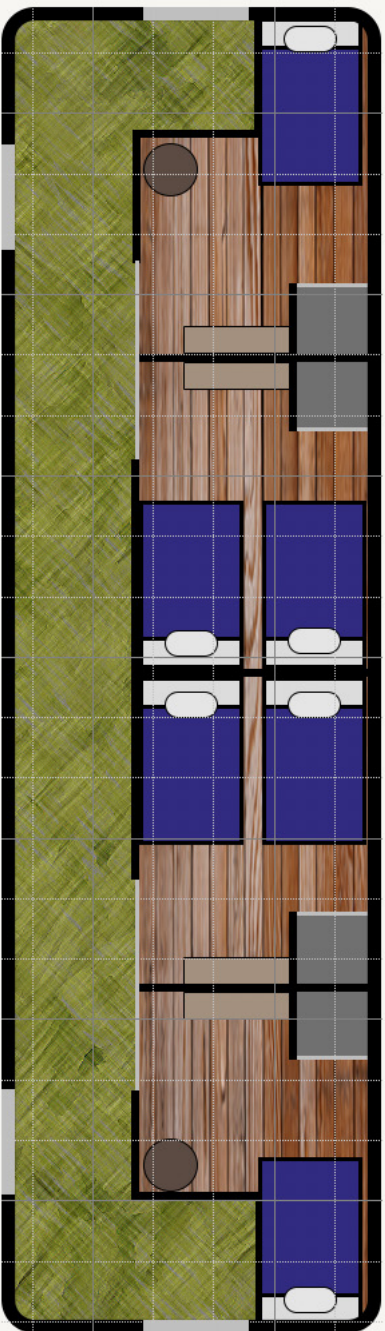


SLEEPER CAR

Rearward

1 Square = 1.5 ft. x 1.5 ft.

Forward

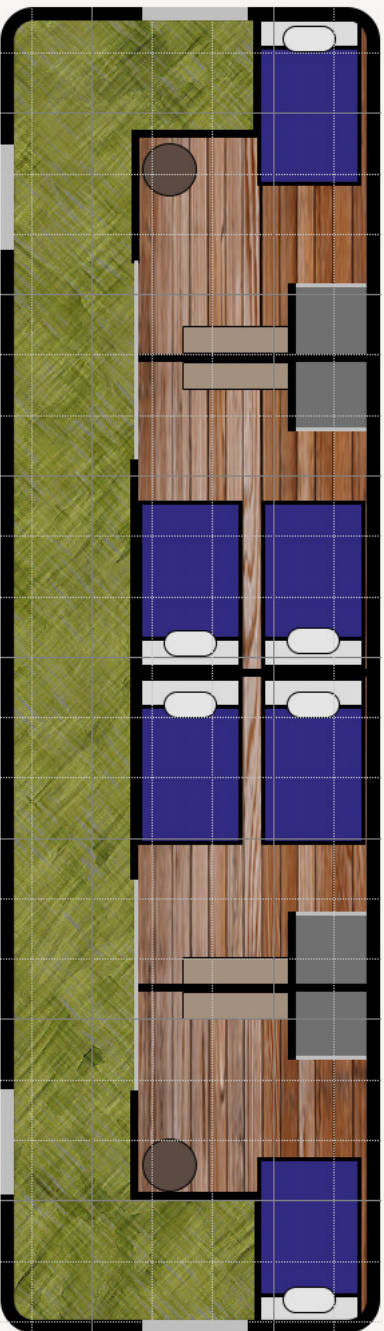


SLEEPER CAR

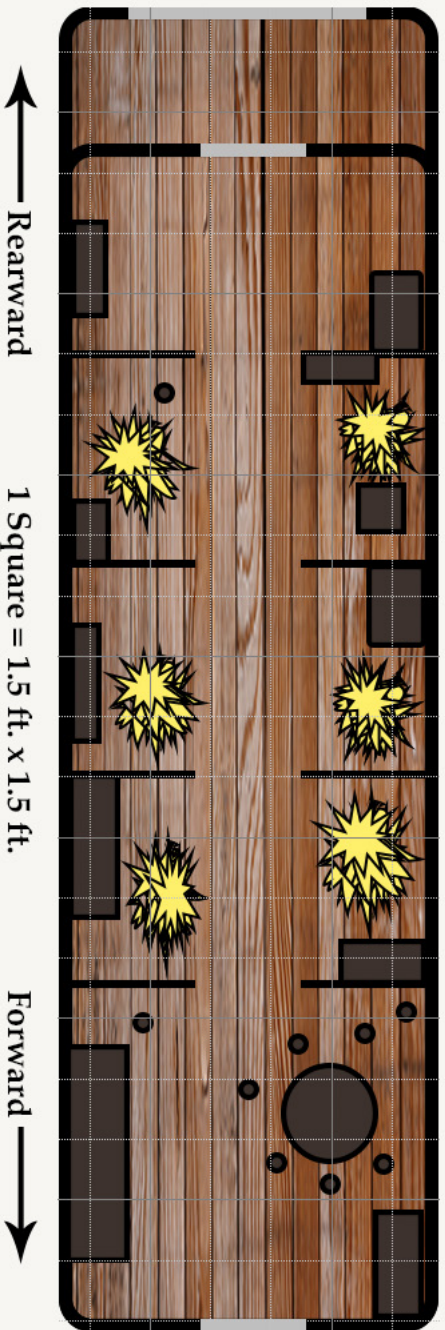
Rearward

1 Square = 1.5 ft. x 1.5 ft.

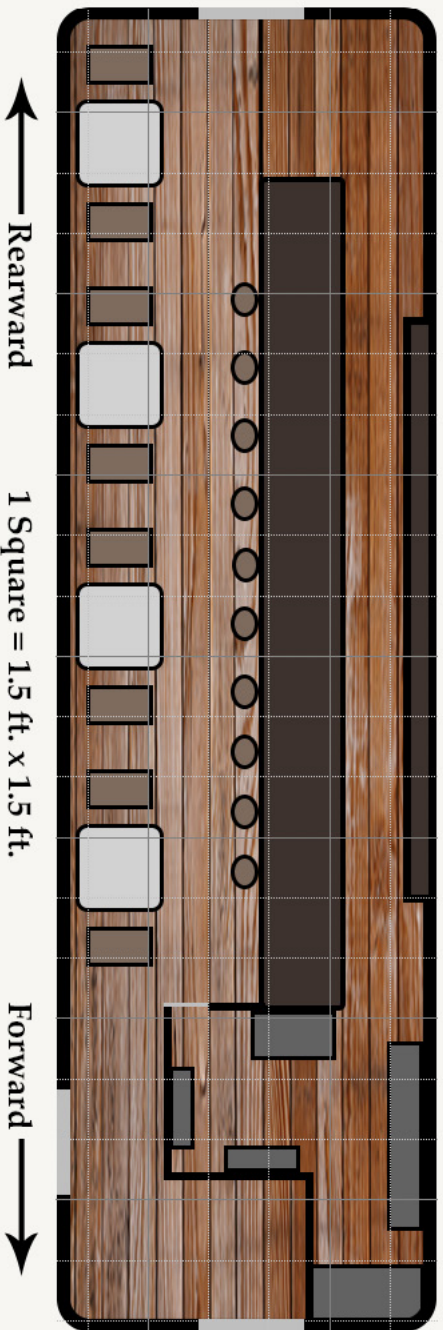
Forward



CABOOSE



DINING CAR



TRAIN CAR MAPS

(without grid overlays)

